

# A Drive I Don't Remember

A Lesson  
For Everyone!  
REBEL



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**B**y all rights, I should be dead. The sad part is I would have injured or killed at least two other people with me. Here's the story of a fatigued-driving experience I had.

I was working my way through college as a firefighter and emergency-medical technician (EMT). I had qualified to work as a 911 dispatcher for the fire department and also was moonlighting as an ambulance driver and EMT attendant. One day during class, I got a message that the fire department needed a dispatcher to fill in on the graveyard shift. Naturally, I jumped at the chance. I knew I had ambulance on-call the next day, but I wasn't worried because I usually would go home and take a nap after checking out the ambulance.

After a typically boring night of dispatcher duty, I made it to the ambulance station a little tired but excited about the day ahead. Everything went OK until about 30 minutes before I was to head home, when I was offered the opportunity to work the remainder of the 24-hour shift. Being a broke college student, I accepted.

I told the boss I had been up all night and would need to take a nap. "Fine, no problem" was

the reply. The day wore on into the afternoon when my partner and I received a call to transfer a patient from Prescott to Tuscon, Ariz., a six-hour trip each way. Because my partner couldn't drive (for whatever reason), I had to, while he assisted the patient in the back of the ambulance.

Fifteen minutes into the drive, my eyelids grew heavy, but I was prepared for this problem. I opened a Coke and was good to go—until its effectiveness wore off, which seemed like just minutes later. In no time, I went through a six-pack.

By this time, we were at I-17, getting ready to turn toward Phoenix. My eyelids nearly were closed, and I assure you, driving with your eyes closed isn't easy. How I was able to sleep and drive without wrecking the ambulance I'll never know. **I only remember waking up when we were half-way through the Phoenix metro area, and I was fine for the rest of the trip.** Later, I talked to my partner, and he told me he was worried a couple of times when I **drifted off the road**. If he only knew I basically had slept about an hour while behind the wheel.

Ever since that experience, I've always made sure I get a good night's sleep before driving long distances. When I grow tired, I stop and change drivers or take a break, even if it means sleeping in the parking lot of a truck stop. Fatigued driving isn't something to mess around with; it will kill you. It nearly killed me. ☹️

*For more information about fatigued driving, visit [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org).*